



ACADEMIC STRESS AND SELF-EFFICACY AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS IN INDIA

Bawa Karwal¹

Abstract: Modern age is particularly complex. Most people would argue that being an adolescent today is a vastly different experience from what it was even a few decades ago. The perception of this change as well as actual change is a testimony to the powerful influence of social contexts on adolescent development. The teens face a real predicament today. If these external forces are in tune with their in-built skills and aspirations their growth becomes natural and exciting otherwise it can wreak havoc to their already precarious self efficacy. A developing country like India, in particular can ill-afford wasting precious resources to a pandemic of academic stress. A study by Deb et al., 2015, revealed that nearly two-thirds (63.5%) of the Indian students reported stress due to academic pressure (Deb S, Strodl E, Sun J, 2015) There is an urgent need to unshackle these hapless teens from the vicious grip of academic stress and provide them a congenial environment and give them an opportunity to achieve their true and maximum potential. The onset of puberty is the highlight of the students in Secondary school, from a developmental perspective. . According to Stanley Hall, it is a period that is characterized by “storm and stress”. In this age of fierce, cut-throat competition the overall well being of adolescents is increasingly overlooked. Educators often underestimate the importance of developing student’s abilities to adapt and get along with people; however, students learning abilities depend on their experience of their ability to adapt and cope with people (Elias, 2001). The Objective of this paper is to understand academic stress and self efficacy among college students in India.

Keywords: Self-efficacy, Academic Stress, College Students

¹ Junior Research Fellow, Department of Sociology, Panjab University, Chandigarh (India)

Email: bawakarwal100@gmail.com, bawakarwal@pu.ac.in

Contact: 9914982017€

INTRODUCTION

Modern age is particularly complex. Most people would argue that being an adolescent today is a vastly different experience from what it was even a few decades ago. The perception of this change as well as actual change is a testimony to the powerful influence of social contexts on adolescent development. The teens face a real predicament today. If these external forces are in tune with their in-built skills and aspirations their growth becomes natural and exciting otherwise it can wreak havoc to their already precarious self efficacy. A developing country like India, in particular can ill-afford wasting precious resources to a pandemic of academic stress.

There is an urgent need to unshackle these hapless teens from the vicious grip of academic stress and provide them a congenial environment and give them an opportunity to achieve their true and maximum potential. The onset of puberty is the highlight of the students in Secondary school, from a developmental perspective. . According to Stanley Hall, it is a period that is characterized by “storm and stress”. In this age of fierce, cut-throat competition the overall well being of adolescents is increasingly overlooked. Educators often underestimate the importance of developing student’s abilities to adapt and get along with people; however, students learning abilities depend on their experience of their ability to adapt and cope with people (Elias, 2001).

It is interesting to note that there are cases where capable learners do not perform up to their potential, despite positive environmental conditions whereas students, who do not compare that favorably on ability with the more talented ones, do end up performing above average on grade expectations. It is an empirical truth that a student with great intellectual and cognitive potential does not always attain success and, conversely, a student who is not rated that highly on his intellectual abilities manages to do better in life. Many variables interact to produce this phenomenon; self-efficacy is probably the most significant one. Merely, possessing knowledge and skills does not mean that one will use them effectively under difficult conditions (Bandura, 1986). Only those who are more self efficacious about being able to effectively manage and cope with these circumstances are expected to have probability of succeeding even if others have the same inherent ability or skill level.

The concept of self-efficacy is the focal point of Bandura's social cognitive theory. According to this theory, individuals can have control over their thoughts, feelings and actions and behave accordingly. Bandura (1986) states that- “people will be more inclined to take on a task they believe they can succeed in. People generally avoid tasks where their self-efficacy is low but will engage in task where their self-efficacy is high”. A strong sense of academic self-efficacy enhances students' academic accomplishment, quality of functioning and personal well-being (Adeyemo, 2001 and Pajares, 1996). Educator Kathy Kolbe observes that “Belief in innate abilities means valuing one’s particular set of cognitive strengths. It also involves determination and perseverance to overcome obstacles that would interfere with utilizing those innate abilities to achieve goals”. Bandura (1997) stated that a sense of self-efficacy is an important predictor of the accomplishment of further competences and successes.

The above discussion seems to suggest that mere possession of abilities and skills does not guarantee success. Belief in those abilities and the resilience and persistence are a more important factor for success,

ACADEMIC STRESS

Academic stress refers to the feeling that students experience when the demands of education and school system exceed their ability to cope. It is an internal state of an individual, evaluated as potentially harmful, uncontrollable or exceeding one's resources to cope with the stress caused partially or fully by school and academic factors such as examinations, competitions, teaching processes, teachers' behavior, classroom condition and general academic and co-curricular activities. It has been proven and accepted that a certain, minimum level of stress is necessary for optimum performance. Many students realize their full potential only when under a reasonable level of tension. However, excessive and unremitting stress leads to maladaptive behavior. Exam Anxiety, Success versus Failure, Personality and Competition etc. are some major academic stressors. Various studies suggest that academic self efficacy moderates the effect of academic stress.

Academic stress is the adjustive demand caused by academic factors placed on the organism. "It is a mental distress with respect to some anticipated frustration associated with academic failure, anticipation of such failure or even an awareness of the possibility of such failure" (Gupta and Khan, 1987). The influence of environmental factors such as home, school, peers etc. on individual development is evident. Stress has been a long researched issue in academic circles but this topic needs more attention (Agolla, 2009).

SELF-EFFICACY

Albert Bandura defines self efficacy as "how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations". He also adds that "Expectations of self-efficacy determine whether an individual will be able to exhibit coping behavior and how long effort will be sustained in the face of obstacles". He first introduced the construct of self efficacy almost three decades ago which is an important construct in his social cognitive theory. The theory holds that self-referent thought mediates between knowledge and action, and consequently individuals evaluate their own experiences and thought processes through self-reflection. The process of self-reflection includes a focus on our beliefs about self, which in turn includes an evaluation of the extent to which we exercise control over our self. It is an evaluation of our control over our beliefs, values, attitudes, environment and behavior (Bandura, 1977, 1997). The focus on self in the sense of personal agency can be regarded as perceived self-efficacy (Bandura 1977, 1997).

In social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986), people are seen as self organizing, proactive and self-regulating, rather than as passively reacting organisms influenced by environmental factors or driven by hidden inner desires. In addition, it explains that an individual's functioning and activities are the outcome of a dynamic interaction of three important factors. These are: (i) A person's behavior; (ii) Personal factors (e.g., thoughts, beliefs, etc.); and (iii)

Environmental conditions. These three factors together exert mutual influences on one another. Bandura calls this reciprocal interaction as reciprocal determinism and according to him, it is triadic in form. Self-regulation concerns how students regulate aspects of their thinking, motivation and behaviour during learning (Pintrich & Zusho, 2002). Self-regulated learners set goals for their learning and regulate and control their cognition and motivation and adopt strategies to achieve their learning goals. The best conditions for promoting internal motivation and perception of self-efficacy, and for encouraging students to employ self regulatory strategies, are created when individuals' perceived controllability is enhanced (Bandura & Wood, 1989) and when they are granted large opportunities to participate in decision-making in class (Ames, 1992; Zimmerman, 1995). In social cognitive theory, perceived self-efficacy functions as an essential factor in self-regulatory mechanisms (Bandura & Wood, 1989).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

STUDIES RELATED TO ACADEMIC STRESS

Tiwari and Balani (2013) studied the intervention program to stress reduction and reported that the working hours of school, workload, lack of resources to carry out their job, and the low level of reward were most frequently identified as stressors among students.

Dr. Sarita and Sonia (2015) conducted a study on academic stress and the role and responsibilities of parents.. The results revealed that (a) social support is one of the most important ways of coping with academic stress. (b) parents play a key role in overcoming deviant behaviours (c) coping strategies include self responsibility and finding positive, non destructive ways to get relief..

Khan and Kausar (2013) explored the effect of academic stress on students' performance and the impact of demographic variables like gender, age and educational level. The results showed significant effect of academic stress on student's performance. There was a non-significant difference between male and female university students on scores on the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS). A significant difference between junior and senior students was found on the PSS. Academic stress was found to be higher in younger students than older students. There was a non-significant difference on PSS scores among students when stress was measured at the beginning and at the end of the semester

K Jayashankara Reddy, Karishma Rajan and Anjana Thattil (2018)

This study was undertaken to understand the level of academic stress faced by students and the various sources that contribute to the same. Gender differences and streamwise differences were analyzed on the basis of data collected from undergraduate students from various streams. The study concluded that while prevalence of stress was a non-stream specific situation, medical and engineering students reported higher level of stress. Understanding the

source of stress and application of psychotherapies, yoga and mindfulness was considered effective in addressing this problem.

Chabbra and Sodhi (2011) worked on the factors that lead to Psycho-Social Ill-Health among 500 male adolescents aged 12 to 18 years in Amritsar and found that middle adolescents were more affected by psychological problems. These adolescents with psychological problems were having significantly more school related issues, disturbed families, domestic violence and lesser number of close friends. Also, study reported that the stress was more in large extended families (> 8 members).

Ahmad et al. (2002) reported that majority of psycho-social problems in school going adolescents stemmed directly from educational problems faced by them. Obviously, academic stress directly results in a host of other psycho-social problems in teenagers.

Bhasin et al. (2010) done study on students belonging to classes from ninth to twelfth in Delhi and it was found that students appearing in board examinations i.e., 10th and 12th were more stressed as compared to students of non-board classes i.e. 9th and 11th.

P Jayanthi , Thirunavukarasi and R Rajkumar (2015) undertook a study on students from select secondary schools in Tamil Nadu and concluded that academic stress is associated with teenage depression. The chief causes of stress are self expectations and perceived pressure, as also expectations from teachers and parents. It was also found that academic stress in adolescent girls was higher than that of boys.

Deb and Walsh (2010) conducted a cross sectional study on anxiety among high school students in Kolkata and revealed that adolescents from the middle socio-economic group were more anxious than adolescents from both high and low socio-economic groups and also adolescent children of working mothers were found to be more prone to anxiety.

Vamadevappa (2009) in a study revealed that there is a positive and significant relationship between parental involvement and academic stress among the higher students pursuing higher education. Good parental involvement leads to higher academic stress.

N Sasikumar and R Bapitha (2019) studied the stress and academic achievement in students in the district of Pudukottai, Tamil Nadu. The studies concluded that academic achievement and academic stress have a significant relationship. Parental educational status, location of the students' homes and their schools made a difference in the academic performance. The study also confirmed the previous studies findings that stressors have to be identified and eliminated, but it was also discovered that higher academic achievements can be obtained at higher stress levels and this depended on the students' ability to cope.

STUDIES RELATED TO SELF-EFFICACY

Alay Ahmad and Triantro Safaria (2013)- The study confirmed that students with high self-efficacy are likely to choose more challenging courses than their counterparts with low self efficacy. It is imperative that parents and teachers work on improving the self efficacy in their children.

Linenbrink and Pintrich (2003) conducted a study on the role played by self-efficacy beliefs in student learning and involvement in the classroom and had shown that academic self-efficacy is significantly associated with cognitive engagement, persistence, analytical thinking, academic commitment, achievement, strategy use, students' learning, and susceptibility to negative emotions.

Pajares and Miller (2001) investigated that students who have a developed sense of self-efficacy are well equipped to edify themselves when they have to rely on their own initiative. In a nutshell, self-confident individuals perceive situations and extend solutions to any problem they may come across. Individuals who consider them efficacious will persist on hopeless tasks and consider their belief system as the source of their strength.

Silver, Smith, & Greene (2001) conducted a study on “strategies self- efficacy instrument on community college students” and suggested that achievement in community college students was significantly and positively related to Self- efficacy.

Zimmerman (2000) investigated on the link between self-efficacy and motivation to learn. Self belief in students about their academic capabilities plays a significant role in a students motivation to achieve. Students' self efficacy beliefs are responsive to changes in instructional experience to peers with weaker sense of perceived self-efficacy.

An overview of the survey of Literature also reveals that there is a need to conduct an in-depth study on the academic stress and self - efficacy of male and female students. The subject is most topical and, in fact, it would not be an exaggeration to call it a smoldering problem of utmost urgency.

CONCLUSION

Related literature provides a coherent framework linking Self-efficacy and Stress and even smaller number of studies have addressed the academic stress and self-efficacy in Indian context. Academic stress and self-efficacy beliefs are key constructs that effects academic achievement of students. The present study is an attempt in this direction. Hence, it has been felt that a study of academic stress and self-efficacy beliefs among a sample of adolescents would be worthwhile in our efforts to ensure an education of high quality to our young generation. The Objective of this paper is to understand academic stress and self efficacy among students.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Academic Stress: Academic Stress is mental distress with respect to some anticipated frustration associated with academic failure or an awareness of possibility of such failure.

Self-efficacy: Self-efficacy is a person's beliefs or conviction that they can successfully achieve at a designated level on an academic task or attain a specific academic goal.

REFERENCES

1. A. Ramakrishnan. (2007). Effect of Anxiety levels of M.Ed Students on Academic Performance. *Edutracks*, 7 (4), 35-39
2. Askar, P., and Davenport, D. (2009). An Investigation of Factors Related to SelfEfficacy for Java Programming among Engineering Students. *The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 8(1), 26.
3. Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York: W.H. Freeman.
4. Bandura, A. (1999). *Self-efficacy: Towards a unifying theory of behavioural change*. In R.F. Baumeister (Ed.), *The self in social psychology*. Philadelphia, PA: Taylor and Francis Group.
5. Bandura, A. et al. (2001). Self-efficacy beliefs as shapers of children's aspirations and career trajectories. *Child Development*.
6. Bowers, K. S., & Kelly, P. (1979). Stress, disease, psychotherapy, and hypnosis. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 88, 506-526.
7. Jain (2007). Role of perceived parental encouragement in male and female adolescent students attending coaching institutions at Kota. *Social Science International*, 24(1): 78-88.
8. Kearney, L. J. (2010). Differences in Self-Concept, Racial Identity, Self-Efficacy, Resilience, and Achievement among African-American Gifted and Non-Gifted Students: Implications for Retention and Persistence of African Americans in Gifted Programs. *Dissertation Abstract International*, 71(6), 1578-A.
9. Koura, A.A., and Al-Hebaishi, S.M. (2014). The Relationship between Multiple Intelligences, Self-Efficacy and Academic Achievement of Saudi Gifted and Regular Intermediate Students. *Educational Research International*, 3(1), 48- 70.
10. Lodewyk, K.R., and Winne, P.H. (2005). Relations among the Structure of Learning Tasks, Achievement, and Changes in Self-Efficacy in Secondary Students. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 97(1), 3-12.
11. Magno, C., and Lajom, J.A. (2008). A Cross-Sectional Study on Young and Late Adolescents' Self-Regulation, Self-Efficacy, Metacognition and Achievement Goals. *Philippine Journal of Psychology*, 41(1 and 2), 1-23.
12. Pestonjee (1992). *Stress and coping: The Indian experience*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1992, pp.240 SAGE Publications.

13. Sawari, S.S.B.M., and Mansor, N.B. (2013). A Study of Student's General SelfEfficacy related to Gender Differences. *International Journal of Informative and Futuristic Research*, 1 (4), 62-67.
14. Sawari, S.S.B.M., Kazeem, B., and Mansor, N.B. (2013). Investigating the Corelationship between Levels of Self-Efficacy and Gender. *International Journal of Education and Research*, 1(12), 1-8.
15. Siegle, D., Rubenstein, L.D., and McCoach, D.B. (2011). Comparing Teachers', Parents', and Gifted Underachieving Students' Personal Perceptions of Factors Associated with Student Achievement. Paper Presented At The Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA.
16. Tamannaefifar, M., and Leis, H. (2014). Relationship between Self-Efficacy and Academic Achievement among High-School Students. *International Journal of Psychology and Behavioral Research*, 3(2), 89-95.
17. Tenaw, Y.A. (2013). Relationship between Self-Efficacy, Academic Achievement and Gender in Analytical Chemistry at Debre Markos College of Teacher Education. *African Journal of Chemical Education*, 3(1), 3-28.
18. R. Bhansali., & K. Trivedi. (2015). Is Academic Anxiety Gender Specific? A Comparative Study. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 17 (1), 1-3. Retrieved from www.krepublishers.com
19. Jayanthi., & T. Padmanaban. (2008). Test Anxiety of Higher Secondary Students. *Edutracks*, 8(2), 36-38.
20. Trivedi.R.M. (2014). Anxiety Level and Achievement Under Graduate Students. *Edutracks*, 7 (4), 35-39.
21. V. S. Ganesan. (2015). The Effect of Anxiety on Academic Achievement. *Journal of Educational Research and Extension*, 26 (3), 154-167.
22. V.R.Kumari & S.Chamundeswari. (2015). Achievement Motivation, Study Habits and Academic Achievement of students at the secondary level. *International Journal of Emerging Research in Management and Technology*, 4(10),7-13. Retrieved from <https://www.ermt.net/docs>
23. Deb S, Strodl E and Sun J. (2015). Academic stress, parental pressure, anxiety and mental health among Indian high school students. *International journal psychology behavioral science*, 26-34.